ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

A method and apparatus for detecting and mapping digital errors on optical media is provided which includes an invalid symbol detector capable of detecting errors in real time. The method and apparatus further includes the ability to set a run-length mask enabling selective display of specific run-lengths. The method and apparatus of error mapping enables the detection of errors at the time that the data is read and before the data is processed by traditional error detection and correction circuits. Capturing the errors relative to their physical location on the optical media allows the creation of an error map or surface presentation of the errors. The resulting error map displays the location and magnitude of digital errors caused by invalid symbols. The error map allows the test operator to quickly determine the specific location and or distribution of errors on the optical media.